

APRIL 12, 1976

FOREIGN POLICY AND THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

ANNCR: VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAMEY HAS SOME THOUGHTS ON FOREIGN POLICY AS AN ISSUE IN THE UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN:

VOICE: RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEEN SEVENTY-SIX PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN, THE FOREIGN POLICIES OF THE FORD ADMINISTRATION WERE UNDER ATTACK---ON ISSUES RANGING FROM THE MIDDLE EAST TO THE PANAMA CANAL, FROM ANGOLA TO SOVIET-AMERICAN DETENTE, AND FROM STRATEGIC ARMS NEGOTIATIONS TO NATIONAL DEFENSE CAPABILITIES. MUCH OF THE CRITICISM HAS COME FROM SENATOR HENRY JACKSON, WHO IS TRYING TO WIN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S NOMINATION. BUT EVEN MORE---AND HARsher---CRITICISM HAS COME FROM RONALD REAGAN, THE FORMER GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA, WHO WANTS TO BEAT OUT PRESIDENT FORD AND SECURE THE REPUBLICAN PARTY NOMINATION.

AS A RESULT OF THIS CRITICISM, MR. FORD HAS BEEN COMPELLED TO DEFEND HIS POLICIES AND TO WORK AT NEUTRALIZING THE CHARGES OF HIS OPPONENTS. IN PARTICULAR, HE HAS HAD TO DEAL WITH ACCUSATIONS THAT AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY HAS BEEN TOO SOFT, TOO CONCILIATORY IN DEALING WITH SOVIET AGGRESSIVENESS, TOO APT TO CONVEY AN IMPRESSION OF AMERICAN WEAKNESS, AND LAX IN PROVIDING ADEQUATELY FOR THE COUNTRY'S DEFENSE. FORMER GOVERNOR REAGAN VOICED THESE CHARGES IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS IN A NATIONAL TELEVISION BROADCAST LAST WEEK. AND IT IS CLEARLY WITH THESE CHARGES IN MIND THAT MR. FORD HAS INSISTED THAT THE UNITED STATES IS FIRST IN MILITARY CAPABILITY, AND THAT THIS COUNTRY HAS NOT FOLLOWED A FOREIGN POLICY OF WEAKNESS.

THE TROUBLE WITH THIS EMPHASIS ON DEFENSE IS THAT MR. FORD, AS HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT, HAS TO MAKE SURE THAT HE IS NOT MISUNDERSTOOD, PARTICULARLY IN OTHER COUNTRIES. IT WAS APPARENTLY WITH THIS RESPONSIBILITY IN MIND THAT HE STRESSED---IN A SPEECH LAST FRIDAY---THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SPIRIT OF CONCILIATION IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. HE PLEDGED HIMSELF "TO WORK FOR A WORLD WHERE THE FOUNDATION OF PEACE IS MUTUAL SELF-INTEREST INSTEAD OF MUTUAL TERROR, TO REDUCE WORLD TENSION THROUGH PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE---RATHER THAN INCREASE THOSE TENSIONS WITH HOT WORDS OR RASH THREATS." WARNING AGAINST WHAT HE CALLED "SABER-RATTLING," MR. FORD ADDED THAT CONFLICTS SHOULD BE WORKED OUT BY CONCILIATION AND NOT IN---TO QUOTE HIS PHRASE---"A DUEL THAT WOULD LEAVE THE WORLD IN ASHES."

ANY AMERICAN PRESIDENT IN OFFICE OBVIOUSLY HAS CERTAIN ADVANTAGES OVER HIS OPPONENTS; HE CAN TAKE FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES AND MAKE FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS THAT WILL GAIN HIM NEWS HEADLINES AND VOTER ATTENTION. BUT HIS POSITION ALSO HAS CERTAIN OBVIOUS HAZARDS---CHIEFLY THE NEED TO CONDUCT A RESPONSIBLE FOREIGN POLICY, INCLUDING POLICY RELATING TO AREAS WHICH ARE OF CONCERN TO SIGNIFICANT SPECIAL GROUPS OF AMERICAN VOTERS, SUCH AS, EASTERN EUROPE, CYPRUS AND THE MIDDLE EAST. HE MUST CONVINCE THE CONSERVATIVES THAT HE IS STAUNCHLY DEFENDING AMERICAN INTERESTS, AND THE LIBERALS THAT HE HAS THE PROPER INTERNATIONALIST ORIENTATION. ALL THIS, WHILE HIS RIVALS KEEP UP A RUNNING FIRE OF COMMENT AND CRITICISM---WHICH, GIVEN HIS POSITION, HE CANNOT ALWAYS ANSWER WITH FACILE PLATITUDES. IT IS NOT ANY EASY TASK, AND PART OF THE CHANCE FOR A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN---BOTH FOR THE NOMINATION AND THE ELECTION---WILL DEPEND ON HOW WELL MR. FORD CARRIES IT OUT.
END